

# Free Speech and Religion: Lecture in Honor of Isaac Meyers, (1979–2008)

Daniel Johnson

**Editors' Note:** In 2009, one year after the untimely passing of noted and beloved 29-year-old graduate student Isaac Meyers, Oxford University's Chabad Society inaugurated its Isaac Meyers Memorial Lecture in Jewish Classics. Meyers, who studied at the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies in 2003, was a native New Yorker who earned a BA in Classics (Latin) from Yale in 2001, a MSt in Jewish Studies at St. Peter's College in 2004, and, at the time of his death, had completed his oral exams with distinction for a Ph.D. in Classical Philology at Harvard University. Meyers was a popular Latin instructor. His article about the translations from Hebrew to Greek of the Septuagint was published posthumously in *Prooftexts*. His biblical interpretation appeared in *The Forward*.<sup>1</sup>

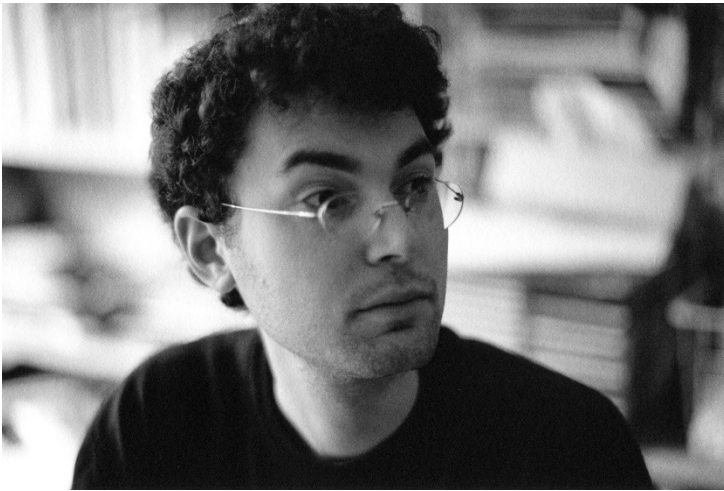
## Isaac Meyers: Classicist

It is one of the greatest honors of my life to be here as a guest of the Oxford University Chabad Society, to give this annual lecture in memory of Isaac Meyers. Isaac's parents, Bill and Nahma Meyers, are among my dearest friends. I owe them a profound debt of gratitude for their kindness and hospitality at their beautiful riverside home on the Upper West Side in Manhattan. I never met their beloved only son, Isaac, but I sense his presence and feel the pain of his absence every time I visit. Isaac spent a year here studying for a Masters degree at the Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, Oxford, before continuing his academic career at Harvard. That he was a talented classical scholar is apparent from an unfinished essay, "Shades of Propertius," that appeared posthumously in the prestigious literary journal *Parnassus*. A brief passage will give you a flavor of Isaac's inimitable style:

<sup>1</sup> Joshua Runyan, Mark Tilse, "Lecture Memorializes Short, Inspiring Life of Jewish Graduate Student," Chabad.edu, June 10, 2009.

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A feature of Propertius' verse that non-classicists are likely to find remarkable is his abundant use of mythological and geographical reference. He will develop a thought, often quite abruptly (though this may be due to textual corruption), with an example from myth, or he may enlarge on a description by invoking Greek; a Greek toponym is good for making even nearby locales seem exotic. Such luxuriance of allusion in English poets, at least ones that are still read, begins and ends with Milton.



I love Isaac's phrase "luxuriance of allusion." And how apposite, yet still striking, that he should bring up (and then proceed to quote) Milton, as a poet who is still read. My impression, alas, is that *Paradise Lost* is not much read these days, even by those who study English literature, let alone the rest of his poetic oeuvre. Yet Milton's prose—and especially his pamphlet *Areopagitica*—is indispensable to our consideration of free speech and religion, the subject of this lecture. Appropriately enough, Isaac's father Bill tells me that he has "a dim memory of reading *Areopagitica* at college." So Milton's defense of the freedom of the press is a good place to start.

## John Milton: Freedom of Expression

Looking for *Areopagitica* on my bookshelves, I found it included in a collection, *British Pamphleteers*, co-edited by George Orwell and published in 1948. In his introduction, Orwell points out that by 1644, when he was writing in the middle of the English Civil War, Milton was "horrified to find that those he had

so vigorously defended in the name of freedom were themselves behaving autocratically when they had the power to do so. It was an experience not new to history, and it has been repeated rather monotonously in all subsequent revolutions." When Orwell wrote these words, he was still working on *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, his dystopian satire on the Communist totalitarians who had not merely suppressed free speech but perverted the very concept of truth. Hence Milton must have seemed to Orwell a prophet crying in the wilderness, preaching to the Lords and Commons as he did that "opinion in good men is but knowledge in the making." After the popular revolution against royal tyranny, bringing with it a relaxation of censorship, Milton was incensed that the parliamentary authorities could even think of reimposing it. "Give me the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience, above all liberties." Nobody has ever put the case for freedom of expression better. But the civil war was as much about religion as politics. The great fear which he was seeking to allay, of course, was that the explosion of diverse and outlandish opinions would wreak havoc with the Calvinist purity of the Protestant cause. In scarcely less celebrated words, Milton explains exactly why, for the sake of faith, censorship was not merely wrong but also superfluous: "And though all the windes of doctrin were let loose to play upon the earth, so Truth be in the field, we do injuriously by licencing and prohibiting to misdoubt her strength. Let her and Falsehood grapple; who ever knew Truth put to the wors, in a free and open encounter."

This is what we might call the agonistic argument for free speech. The easier it is for people to speak freely, and the more people actually do so, the more likely it is that truth will emerge from the fray. In the field of biblical exegesis, this has always been the rabbinical method, too. In almost two millennia since the destruction of the Temple, each generation of scholars, Ashkenazi and Sephardi, has added their insights, with commentary upon commentary, marginalia upon marginalia, creating a palimpsest of wisdom and an ever-expanding yet never complete understanding of the Torah. From Akiva to Maimonides, from Luria to Soloveitchik, the many tributaries of Judaism flow into one mighty river of orthodoxy. In modern times, this generous tolerance of immense diversity has occasionally come under strain, but compared to other religions, Judaism has preserved an open-minded pluralism of thought that is probably unique and certainly admirable. Even in the state of Israel, where tensions between secular and religious authorities resemble those of other democracies, the freedom to speak, write, or otherwise express opinions stands

out as an oasis in what has in general been the desert of Middle Eastern politics. Not even the occasional dominance of charismatic leaders, from Ben Gurion to Binyamin Netanyahu, has seriously compromised or circumscribed these liberties. Indeed, Israel has set an example of toleration to its neighbors; the Jewish state has been a light unto the gentiles.

## Religion and Freedom of Conscience

Yet whence came this cardinal principle, this freedom of speech and of the press? How is it related to the freedom of conscience from which all religious freedoms flow? It is no accident that both these kinds of liberty are enshrined in the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. The proximate source of both freedom of speech and of religion is to be found here, in this country, where both the theory and practice of toleration emerged simultaneously with the flowering of the free press, as part of the constitutional settlement that followed the revolutionary upheavals of the seventeenth century. Neither was absolute or universal in either the British mother country or the American republic. In the former, Catholic and Jewish emancipation had to wait until the nineteenth century, while in the latter the phenomenon of McCarthyism still inhibited free speech as late as the mid-twentieth century. As late as 1968, British theater—from Shakespeare onwards, the greatest dramatic tradition in the world—was subject to the censorship of the Lord Chamberlain. Blasphemy as a criminal offense was removed from the statute book in the U.K. even more recently. Yet these and other aberrations apart, both Britain and the United States have famously been the domicile *par excellence* of the free press and freedom of conscience for more than two centuries. But why?

The argument I wish to make is almost absurdly unfashionable. Most secular intellectuals see religion as the enemy of free speech, along with every other progressive cause. The only religion they are uncomfortable about criticizing is the one that actually does persecute those who supposedly blaspheme against its prophet, namely Islam. And, of course, I would never deny that the various branches of Christianity have, at various times and places, been instrumental in persecution, most notoriously in the case of the Inquisition. Yet I would like to suggest that the Judeo-Christian tradition is the principal reason why Britain and America became the bastions of free speech. More specifically: it was the rediscovery of the Hebrew Bible in Elizabethan and Jacobean Britain, during the period that bequeathed us the language of Shakespeare and the King

James Bible, which provided the impulse to demand freedom of conscience and hence also of the means to express that conscience. The Puritan Revolution was fueled by examples and quotations drawn directly from the Bible and mainly from what Christians call the Old Testament. From Abraham and Isaac to the Book of Daniel, biblical cases abound of patriarchs and prophets ready and eager to make the supreme sacrifice for the sake of God's Law. That he treated both human and divine law with contempt was the capital offense of the monarch they came to call "the man of blood." The lesson of the Bible, like that of Magna Carta, was that not even kings are above the Law, let alone above God. To Cromwell and his fellow regicides, Charles was simply Pharaoh and deserving of Pharaoh's fate.

Yet the biblical influence is subtler and deeper than that. If we go back literally to the beginning, to the first book of Genesis, we immediately find something of which pagan mythology is almost entirely ignorant. In the story of Adam and Eve, we find the dawning of the conscience of mankind. In creating these first human beings—and the name "Adam," of course, simply means "human"—the Lord endows them with the moral freedom to choose whether or not to obey Him. The serpent may be more cunning than Eve, but she and her husband are free in a way that it is not. They make their choices and their eyes are opened. Opened to what? To the knowledge of good and evil, in other words to the consciousness of conscience. Realizing that they have broken God's commandment, Adam and Eve accept the consequences. Their banishment from Paradise is also the beginning of history. Humanity is unthinkable without the capacity for good and evil. And freedom of speech is, it would appear, more or less unthinkable too, without the civilization that ultimately emerged from the biblical narrative. We may call it Western civilization, for it has taken root mainly in the West, but in truth it is universal. In so far as these liberties are entrenched in law and political culture, it is overwhelmingly due to the globalization of this uniquely Judeo-Christian inheritance.

Jews and Christians differ fundamentally on the doctrine of original sin which Augustine of Hippo derived from that narrative. Probably very few Christians now believe in that doctrine in its original, somewhat alarming form, but the general idea that human beings have an innate propensity to sin is still widely held. When the Government's "diversity tsar" and "Britain's strictest head," Katharine Birbalsingh, made a casual reference on social media to original sin in the context of how schoolchildren need discipline, she unleashed

a Twitter storm accusing her (quite unjustly) of Christian fundamentalism. But you don't have to subscribe to the Augustinian view of the Fall—as observant Jews in particular do not—to know that human nature is an infinitely variegated mixture of good and evil, freedom and necessity, hope and despair.

Once again, Milton illustrates the ambiguity of the master-narrative in Genesis. His great epic, *Paradise Lost*, is the story “of man’s first disobedience” and its punishment; but it is also a story of emancipation. He captured this open-ended quality of humanity—that the price of freedom is suffering, but the rewards are incommensurably greater—in the poem’s last, sublime lines.

Some natural tears they dropped, but wiped them soon;  
 The world was all before them, where to choose  
 Their place of rest, and Providence their guide:  
 They hand in hand with wandering steps and slow  
 Through Eden took their solitary way.

For Milton, life’s suffering was real: struck by blindness—like his Samson, “eyeless in Gaza”—he was obliged to endure the defeat of his cause at the Restoration, the execution of his erstwhile colleagues and the eclipse of his reputation. As Cromwell’s former Latin Secretary, in 1660 he was arrested and briefly incarcerated in the Tower of London. A Royal proclamation demanded that two of his pamphlets be burned, for asserting that it is lawful “to call to account a Tyrant, or wicked king . . . and put him to death.” This was perhaps the greatest humiliation of all. Here in Oxford, his friend John Rouse, the librarian of the Bodleian, saved his books from burning, first in 1660 and then again in 1683, when the University’s supreme authority, Convocation,<sup>2</sup> ordered his works and those other subversive authors, including Thomas Hobbes, to be consigned to the flames. We have Rouse and others like him to thank for the fact that the books of so many proscribed writers have survived for posterity. Disobedience to human authority, at any rate in the field of publication and censorship, is by no means always a sin.

<sup>2</sup> The formal gathering of all graduates of the university—for example, to elect its Chancellor.

## Britain and the Hebrew Bible

The Hebrew Bible is not, of course, partisan in politics. It may be conscripted by conservatives no less than liberals or radicals. Outside the army and the Commons, the execution of the King in 1649 aroused general consternation and, later, resistance. But to wrest control back from the Puritans, the monarchists, too, needed an arsenal of biblical symbolism to be pressed into service. In order later to preserve the monarchy, especially after the Stuart dynasty had been banished once and for all, the Coronation ceremonies harked back to the kings of ancient Israel: to David and Saul, and above all to Solomon. Handel's great Coronation anthem, *Zadok the Priest*, like his biblical oratorios, is just one of countless exemplars of the self-identification of the British with the Israelites. Although the *Messiah* is undoubtedly a Christian work, almost all the text is adapted from the Hebrew Bible. Early modern British culture was heavily indebted to biblical models and that debt was inherited by the American colonies. As with ancient Israel, however, the British had become host to a small but rapidly growing Jewish community that was very much alive. The invitation to Menassah Ben Israel which re-established Judaism in London was Cromwell's greatest gesture and the philosemitic tradition it inaugurated his most precious legacy. That alone justified his nickname, "God's Englishman," and Milton's eulogy of "our chief of men." The Jewish contribution to the twin causes of free speech and religious toleration on both sides of the Atlantic, and especially in the Anglosphere, has been second to none.

Yet somehow this colossal achievement has been all but squandered in the last few years. A demonic urge to silence, to censor, and to suppress has gripped our intelligentsia—the class that has most to lose by succumbing to the gagging mania. The very institutions that should guard freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and freedom of conscience most jealously have been in the vanguard of what one might call "the Great Intimidation." For every J.K. Rowling who is strong and confident enough to defy the Offence-Finder General, there are countless others who are frightened for their careers and whose response is to self-censor before they can be ruined by mere accusations of racism, transphobia, Islamophobia, white privilege, or any one of a long list of offences. One of the most diabolical aspects of the Great Intimidation is that the charges are often so vague as to be impossible to falsify and hence to refute.

One recent example must stand for many. David Abulafia is a distinguished medieval historian, perhaps the world's leading authority on the

Mediterranean civilizations. He is also a friend of mine. Another Cambridge academic, Priyamvada Gopal, attacked him for—wait for it—praising a third academic, the well-known broadcaster David Olusoga, as “eloquent.” She tweeted: “Calling writers/scholars/intellectuals of colour ‘eloquent’ or ‘articulate’—e.g. Abulafia on Olusoga—can be a little sleight of hand dismissal.” In an interview with Professor Abulafia for *Varsity*, the student newspaper, he replied that Professor Gopal’s accusation was “insulting or possibly libelous.” Bearing in mind that no more serious allegation can be levelled in a university context than that of racial prejudice, what else could Abulafia say? The response from Professor Gopal on social media was as extraordinary as it was revealing. She denounced the student journalists, implying that they were conniving not only with Professor Abulafia but also the “Murdoch press” to tarnish her on account of her opposition to the IHRC (International Human Rights Commission) definition of antisemitism. She even insinuated that one of the students had “quite powerful familial connections to the liberal media” and suggested that *Varsity* had “conflicts of interest which absolutely tarnish the paper’s integrity.” This was the old myth of Jewish conspiracy rearing its head again. Significantly, Professor Gopal poured contempt on the very notion of free speech, because Professor Abulafia has been a brave advocate of what she sneers at as “Freeze Speech.”

So this case brings together two things: free speech and antisemitism. The Cambridge University Jewish Society protested to Professor Gopal, saying that she had “made baseless and damaging accusations . . . [and echoed] historic tropes about media control.” Professor Abulafia himself described her as a “woke warrior,” which seems no less than the truth. The irony is that Professor Gopal was herself taking considerable liberties, using her freedom of speech to imply (falsely) that Jews in the media and academia conspire together, and presenting herself as a victim of sinister forces. This is why I chose this particular example to illustrate the Great Intimidation. As Abulafia says, universities are now in danger of becoming a Looking Glass world in which truth is inverted, identity replaces integrity, and rationality is reduced to absurdity.

As Melanie Phillips wrote recently about the case of Kate Clanchy, the author who has been cancelled by her publisher, the problem here is that most people in authority prefer to keep their heads down when victim status is used to validate what is really a witch-hunt, aimed at closing down debate. “This is



about far more than freedom of speech,” she writes. “It’s about a culture no longer policing its own moral boundaries.”

Religion is not only the traditional way in which we do police our moral boundaries; it is the indispensable prerequisite for the existence of such boundaries at all. Free speech is only one of our most precious civil liberties for as long as it is within the law. Incitement to racial or religious hatred is one of the ways in which it can be abused. Those who demand that their religious or ideological beliefs should be imposed on others by force are not exercising their right to free speech, but closing it down for others. Not only was Salman Rushdie forced into hiding for publishing novel *The Satanic Verses*: the intolerance of free speech that fueled the lethal campaign against him in 1988 still exists, unabated, here in Britain. Malik Faisal Akram, the radical Islamist who held Rabbi Charlie Cytron-Walker and three other Jewish hostages at their synagogue in Texas last month, came from Britain.<sup>3</sup> So did Ali Harbi Ali, the London-born Islamist of Somali heritage who is due to stand trial next month, accused of murdering Sir David Amess, the Conservative MP, last October. Sir David was a devout Catholic and there is no question that Jews and Christians are deliberately targeted. In France, for example, there have been many attacks on both, as well as attempts to suppress freedom of speech. Only last month a young female TV presenter, Ophélie Meunier, became the latest of some thirty-five journalists, lawyers, and others forced to seek police protection or go into hiding. She had been bombarded with death threats for making a documentary, *Zone Interdite*, claiming that Roubaix, a northern French town, has become a no-go area where radical Islam is taking over. Such threats are credible, especially since the *Charlie Hebdo* massacre seven years ago, in which nine journalists or cartoonists and a policewoman died. It is worth recalling that this attack on free speech was connected to the kosher supermarket siege two days later, in which four Jewish hostages were murdered. A similar connection was obvious in the Copenhagen attack a month later, in which an Islamist terrorist shot up a cultural center holding an event titled “Art, Blasphemy, and Freedom of Expression,” and went on to attack a synagogue. On that occasion two victims died and five police officers were wounded before the terrorist was shot. A close family member of

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<sup>3</sup> On August 12, 2022, a man named Hadi Matar, stabbed the Indian-born British-American novelist Salman Rushdie multiple times as prior to a public lecture at the Chautauqua Institution in Chautauqua, New York, United States. Rushdie survived the attack but suffered severe injuries requiring hospitalization.

mine was among those who escaped unharmed; she was struck by the fact that the Danish authorities allowed the event to continue even after the attack.

Such terrorist violence is only the most extreme method of enforcing the prohibition on words or images that even mainstream Muslims condemn as blasphemy. Yet the use of religious justifications to suppress free speech is almost always an illegitimate use, or rather abuse, of religion. Islamists conduct their campaigns of hatred and terrorism against Jews and Christians despite the well-known passage in the Koran which reads: “There is no compulsion in religion.” All three of the monotheistic religions sometimes called “Abrahamic” have sacred texts with strong injunctions against the use of violence against other faiths in the name of God.

And so we are faced with a paradox: without a civilization rooted in biblical religion, we would never have free speech. Yet some of the gravest threats to free speech are made in the name of religion. The most profound reflection on this paradox comes from the late Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, in his 2015 book *Not in God's Name: Confronting Religious Violence*. I knew Lord Sacks for some twenty-five years and I still cannot quite believe that he is no longer with us. Except that, of course, in one sense he still is. His books and writings are still in print, his talks and speeches are still online: his benign presence and stimulating influence are everywhere. My copy of *Not in God's Name*, like most of his other books, bears a generous inscription from the author, including the words “Bless you!” Such a benediction from such a man brings home to me the force of the words: “May his name be for a blessing.” What the Chief, as he was often known, hoped to convey in this book was that the Hebrew Bible contains the solution to the paradox. Through the many biblical stories of sibling rivalry, beginning with Cain and Abel, the Lord teaches us how to deal with sibling rivalry between religions. Isaiah prophesies that in the Messianic age, “Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.” And the history of post-biblical Judaism bears this out, at least until the experience of the Shoah and the creation of the state of Israel obliged Jews to take up arms. As Rabbi Sacks says, “the nation of the sword had become the people of the book.” The intellectual prowess of that people, which has flowered over two millennia, explains why freedom of the press and of speech is so precious to Jews, religious or secular—but also why threats to that freedom are so often accompanied by antisemitism.

## Friend or Foe?

Yet still the notion persists that religion is inimical to the open society. We are haunted by the prejudice that a liberal attitude to free speech is a wholly owned product of the anti-clerical Enlightenment. It is true that from the Counter-Reformation onwards, the Catholic Church compiled a list of books, the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, which the faithful were not supposed to read. This did not necessarily mean that such books did not circulate in Catholic countries. The idea that Catholic philosophers did not read Descartes or Malebranche, whose works were on the Index, is absurd—just as it would be ludicrous to suppose that Jewish philosophers did not read Spinoza, even though he was excommunicated by the rabbinical authorities in Amsterdam.

I am not trivializing the chilling effect of book bans by the Church, any more than I do the toxic consequences of many centuries of anti-Judaic theology, blood libels, and the rest. However, the Catholic contribution to what we now call Western civilization should be weighed against these legacies of persecution. I shall give just one example. Professor Sir Larry Siedentop's book *Inventing the Individual: The Origins of Western Liberalism* demonstrates how medieval canon lawyers made modern individualism possible by an extraordinary alchemy that transmuted biblical morality, scholastic philosophy, and natural law into political thought. Following the medievalist Brian Tierney, Siedentop (who is certainly no Catholic) locates the decisive moment in the birth of liberalism in Gratian's *Decretum*, written in the twelfth century. This compilation of canon law begins: "The human race is ruled by natural law and by usages." The canonists interpreted *jus naturale* to imply subjective free will, which translated into political terms developed into the notion of individual rights. Quite apart from this evolution of the individual, the institutional existence of the Church, as a spiritual rival to the temporal power of the state, created the possibility of limited authority and hence the emergence of rights and liberties, including freedom of speech.

This phenomenon, unique to the intellectual history of the Judeo-Christian West, has over the past century begun to influence other societies too. In Islamic civilization, the mosque provided no comparable counterpoint to the state; nevertheless, it is often religious Muslims who identify with "small-c" conservatives in the West. If Jews and Christians are to reach a *modus vivendi* with the elusive moderate majority of Muslims, they cannot focus only on the secular minority, but must reach out to the rest, for whom Islam is an essential

part their identity. A society that cherishes free speech and the free press is the only basis for a meaningful religious dialogue. Any perceived threat to these liberties is liable to provoke a backlash that may feel disproportionate—for example, the outcry that greeted the removal of the Holocaust graphic novel *Maus* from the curriculum by a school board in Tennessee, or ministerial denunciations of the woke prism through which we are encouraged to see every cultural artefact from monuments to stately homes. I am as irritated as anyone else by the trigger-warnings that are now a constant accompaniment to any film adaptation, exhibition, or revival of the classics. But there is a reason why we may overreact, one that brings us back to Milton, with whom we began.

Long before he wrote *Areopagitica*, Milton had been fascinated by “freedom of speech” (a phrase he used and helped popularize). He knew the great Italian poets and their battles with censorship, chronicled by the contemporary Venetian historian Paolo Sarpi, the manuscript of whose *History of the Inquisition* he smuggled from Italy into London. On his travels he heard the learned men of Florence “bemoan the servile condition into which learning amongst them was brought . . . There it was that I found and visited the famous Galileo grown old, a prisoner to the Inquisition for thinking in astronomy otherwise than the Franciscan or Dominican licensers thought.”

This is the background to Milton’s plea for press freedom against the “licensers” of the notorious Court of Star Chamber and later of Parliament. It is true that Milton’s liberalism had its limits: he did not tolerate “Popery and open superstition,” though he did write that “all charitable and compassionate means be used to win and regain the weak and the misled.” Whoever was in authority, he rebelled against what he called “Inquisitorious and Tyrannical Duncery”—even if that duncery pursued him beyond the grave and others too. In 1683, after two of his books were ordered to be burnt here in Oxford, James Parkinson, a Fellow of Lincoln College, was ejected for “commending to some of his pupils Milton as an excellent book.”

Such things still resonate with us, when academics can lose their jobs for expressing the wrong opinions or, indeed, recommending the wrong books. Reading University is only the latest academic institution to invite ridicule for omitting from a set text lines which depict misogynistic violence. The Reading classics department said that this section of “Types of Women,” a work by the Greek poet Semonides of Amorgos, was “unnecessarily unpleasant and (potentially) triggering.” We can guess what a classicist of the caliber of Isaac Meyers

would have made of such a squeamish caricature of scholarship. This creeping form of censorship begins with bowdlerization and ends with the burning of books. Jews and Christians both have special reason to be vigilant: the former because they have so often been victims of religious intolerance, the latter because they have so often been its perpetrators. Now that they are so often victims too, Christians are more likely to get it. Yet the dangers to freedom of conscience and of speech remains acute.

This is illustrated by the quotation by Heinrich Heine that is engraved on a plaque in the Opernplatz in Berlin where in 1933 the Nazis staged their bonfires of books, mainly by Jewish writers, including Heine himself: "*Dort, wo man Bücher verbrennt, verbrennt man am Ende auch Menschen.*" ("Wherever they burn books, they will in the end burn human beings too.") These lines, of course, are supremely applicable to the Nazis, but they are taken from Heine's play *Almansor*, which is set in Granada after the *Reconquista*. In 1499, the Grand Inquisitor, Archbishop Cisneros of Toledo, ordered the burning of 5,000 Islamic books, including the Koran. Heine put what have become his most celebrated lines into the mouth of Hassan, a Muslim servant. Religious freedom, like freedom of speech, either applies to everybody or to nobody. In our time, there are more insidious ways of suppressing books than burning them. The enemies of liberty have learned how to silence writers before they even dare to write a word. Today, more than ever before, the most dangerous form of censorship is self-censorship.